

Proclamation 5584 of December 3, 1986

Year of the Reader, 1987

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

"To read well, that is to read true books in a true fashion, is a noble exercise," wrote Thoreau. The ability to read and write effectively is essential to the vitality of the mind and to success and accomplishment in every field of endeavor. Some with the ability to read may seldom think of the blessings it bestows, but, sadly, those without it know the difficulty they have in leading fully satisfying lives. They are denied the joy, the knowledge, and the exposure to opportunities that come through mastery of reading skills. They also lack a vital employment skill in our increasingly information-rich society.

During 1987, we will celebrate the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, one of the greatest documents of Western civilization and democratic thought. Every American should be able to read this national testament with full understanding. That goal alone should mobilize us to make ours a fully literate Nation, because our history demonstrates that literacy and real political freedom go hand in hand. Our Nation's heritage of liberty and self-government depends on a literate, informed citizenry.

For these reasons and more, the ability and opportunity to read are of fundamental importance to everyone. The National Commission on Reading, the Librarian of Congress, and others have recently reported that an alarmingly large number of Americans are not able or motivated to read. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress also has noted the importance of focusing national attention on the importance of reading and strengthening national and local efforts to give all Americans the beauty, the promise, and the gift of reading.

The Congress, by Public Law 99-494, has designated 1987 as the "Year of the Reader" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the year of 1987 as the Year of the Reader, and I invite the Governors of every State, employers, government officials, community leaders, librarians, members of the business community, publishers, school superintendents, principals, educators, students, parents, and all Americans to observe this year with appropriate educational activities to recognize the importance of restoring reading to a place of preeminence in our personal lives and in the life of our Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

RONALD REAGAN